

April is STD Awareness Month

APRIL IS STD AWARENESS MONTH: ARE YOU AN “ASKABLE PARENT”?

Half of all sexually active young people in the United States will get an STD by the time they're 25—and most won't know it.

DOVER – Young people aged 15 to 24 account for nearly half of the 19 million new sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) occurring in the United States every year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To prevent the spread of STDs, Delaware's Division of Public Health (DPH) recommends that parents talk to their youth about preventing infection and become an “askable parent.”

“Parents need to become ‘askable parents,’” said DPH Medical Director Awele Maduka-Ezeh, MD. “Being ‘askable’ means that your teen or young adult considers you to be approachable, open to communication, and willing to answer their questions.” To learn more about how to become an “askable parent,” visit the American Sexual Health Association web page for tips and information – www.ashasexualhealth.org/.

STDs pose a serious public health threat, affecting young and old, individuals with high and low incomes, people of all races and sexual orientations. Sexually active individuals should practice safe sex and get tested regularly, particularly if they are at risk for infection. CDC recommendations for STD screenings vary by population, for more information on whether you should be tested visit www.cdc.gov/std/prevention/screeningrecs.htm.

Infections such as chlamydia and gonorrhea are major causes of infertility among women, and these and other common STDs can also increase the risk of HIV transmission for both women and men. In 2014, 4,473 chlamydia cases, 1,279 gonorrhea cases, and 110 syphilis cases were reported to DPH.

Since STDs often have no signs or symptoms, screening and

early diagnosis are vital to prevent serious health consequences. The CDC recommends annual chlamydia screening for sexually active women under the age of 26. They also recommend that males and females between the ages of 11 and 26 be vaccinated against the human papilloma virus (HPV). For sexually active men who have sex with men (MSM), the CDC recommends annual HIV and syphilis blood testing, chlamydia and gonorrhea testing, and more frequent testing for MSM who engage in high-risk behavior.

Together, we can reduce the incidence of STDs. For more information, visit www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/dpc/stds.html or www.cdc.gov/features/stdawareness/index.html. And, visit the American Sexual Health Association at www.ashasexualhealth.org/parents for parent-friendly information.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, drink almost no sugary beverages.

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